BALLET TODAY

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Photograph by Edward Mardinian

IRIS MORLEY *Author of "Soviet Ballet"* **and P. W. MANCHESTER** *Editor of "Ballet Today"*

have written a book which **VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD.** are bringing out in the near future. It is called

"THE ROSE AND THE STAR"

and is a discussion on the similarities and differences of Ballet as it exists in England and in Soviet Russia. It is **not** a book about dancers but about Ballet and the authors have written it in the hope that it will lead to an even greater appreciation of what has been achieved in this country and to a better understanding of what Ballet in Soviet Russia is really like.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE death of Christian Bérard at the tragically early age of forty-six means the loss to the Theatre of one its finest and most imaginative designers. His influence Paris, not only in the theatre but as an Arbiter of the ts in general, was enormous. It is a pity that his only ork for English Ballet should have been the rather satisfactory *Clock Symphony* for which his décor was autifully suited but which could hardly have inspired m. Fortunately we had other opportunities of preciating his genius in several ballets seen here tween 1933 and 1939, and in *Les Forains*, a ballet which s truly a work of collaboration between choreo-pher, designer and composer as it was known in the ys of Diaghilev. *Cotillon* is likely to remain only a emory and since we could never see it danced again as was by the de Basil Company in its full glory we would her this were so, but merely to say its title evokes the sty mauve, the black and silver, the primrose yellow, l the row of gilt chairs on either side of that magic lroom. Later came *La Symphonie Fantastique* and even e ghostly reproduction we saw in 1947 gave more than int of its quality. Massine's *Seventh Symphony* also owed uch to Bérard who was one of the few designers who s equally successful with both scenery and costumes. died on the stage while working on the décor of a w play for Louis Jouvet—a perfect end for one who ed the theatre as Bérard did.

The vociferous enthusiasm of audiences at the Princes eatre during the Ballets de Paris season, combined th the similar enthusiasm which reigns at Sadler's ells Theatre at ballet matinées has a significant lesson those who care to learn it. I am sure the audiences at Princes Theatre were quite well aware that the ertoire on the whole was a very poor one and that a of the male dancing was thoroughly slipshod; and that audiences at Sadler's Wells are equally aware that se young dancers have still a great deal to learn in the y of stagecraft, presentation, characterisation and a t of other things that only come with experience. ny, therefore, the roof-raising receptions? Surely the answer is—the vitality of the dancers, their appearance of loving what they are doing, of actually enjoying their work! A soothing monotone may be charming most of the time but a good, honest shout occasionally has contrast value which should not be ignored. I think that between now and October a little practice shouting in the vicinity of Bow Street had better be allowed.

And since it is plain that English audiences *do* like a certain amount of acrobacy in ballet however often they are told it is terribly bad form, why doesn't one of our choreographers make sure of that present day necessity—a box office hit—by having all our leading dancers turning cartwheels, doing the splits and standing on their heads? None of these feats present any difficulty to a dancer: they would probably love it and audiences certainly would. Combined with the taste for which our Ballet is famous, the whole thing would be a push over, and as English audiences would far rather applaud their own dancers doing these things if they only had the opportunity, it would forestall any future visiting company whose members can not only kick above their heads but do so in public.

What on earth is happening in the orchestra pit at Covent Garden this season? Such incredible noises proceed therefrom for some performances that one can only presume that the whole orchestra has taken the evening off in a body and sent in whatever deputies were still standing around in Archer Street at six-thirty. If this continues much longer I suggest that those supremely musical dancers, Fonteyn, Helpmann and Somes take a firm line one night and dance at the correct *tempi* no matter what is happening in front and below them. Audiences will know where the blame lies. Not that even so drastic a step would prevent the apparent playing of scores placed upside down on the desks or the turning over by one half of the orchestra of two pages at once.

Future plans include a season of ballets to be presented by Walter Gore at the Mercury Theatre. Notting Hill will seem like itself again.

Too late for a full review in this issue, I should still like to record the great pleasure accorded by the artistry of Mrinalini Sarabhai and her Indian Dancers during their short season at the St. Martin's Theatre which commenced on March 29th. Only two styles of Indian dancing were represented—Bharata Natyam and Kathakali—the former which is properly performed only by women, the latter showing the male dancer in fantastic jumps. Sarabhai is undoubtedly an exquisite artist, and her partner, Chatunni Panicker recalls the excitement one felt when watching Mahadvhan in Kathakali dances with Uday Shankar's company before the war. This is the easiest style of Indian dancing for western comprehension because, even without understanding, its sheer power gives its own thrill.

P.W.M.

THE COVENT GARDEN SEASON

IT is probable that of the vast audience which welcomed Alexandra Danilova back to Covent Garden on March 14th at least half, and probably more than half, were seeing her for the first time. Ten years is a long time and a ballet audience is mainly a young one because adult responsibilities may well make regular ballet going an impossibility. Ten years is a long time . . . in the life of a dancer as well as to the rest of us. When Danilova last danced in London she was in the full maturity of her dazzling powers—the most beloved ballerina of her day. Only Lopokova has ever equalled her for sheer charm. It would be the rankest hypocrisy to pretend that she has returned to us unchanged. I am writing this immediately after her first *Coppélia* and *La Boutique Fantasque* and the season still has much to show of her, but it is possible to make some kind of assessment though there will be much more to say later.

I have mixed feelings about the wisdom of making *Coppélia* the ballet in which she was re-introduced to us. Remembering her, as I do, as the most enchanting of all the many Swanildas I have seen, it still seems to me that nowadays *Coppélia* cannot be anything but rather tedious to all but the most inexperienced of newcomers. Swanilda, though technically exacting, needs little more in the way of characterisation than youthful high spirits. It is not, therefore, a part in which Danilova can do more

ROBERT HELPMANN, MOIRA SHEARER, MARGARET DALE AND ANNETTE PAGE IN "A WEDDING BOUQUET"

Photograph by Felix Fonteyn

tion photograph by Frank Sharman

MARGOT FONTEYN IN THE SECOND ACT OF "CINDERELLA," PHOTOGRAPHED ON THE NIGHT OF HER RETURN TO COVENT GARDEN

han show in flashes the magnificence of a ballerina of the Russian school. This she did for isolated moments in the irst and third acts. In the second act she revealed nerself as the great *comédienne* we remembered her to be. As the doll she was funny and adorable; those wonderful ong legs, the most beautiful legs in the world as they nave been called (and certainly amongst present day lancers only Fonteyn's are comparable) contrived to dopt an endearing stumpiness and 'spoke' with all the old wit. Perhaps, on reflection, *Coppélia* was worth vhile after all because of that wondrous half hour.

Frederic Franklin, making his first appearance at Covent Garden, did all that was possible with the uninteresting Franz. It was a little American-collegiate t times, but it was both robust and gay and he correctly lid not forget to continue this characterisation in his last ct solo which our own dancers in this part are apt to reat purely as a classical excerpt.

Nadia Nerina and Beryl Grey both distinguished themelves as Dawn and Prayer respectively in the third act *ivertissement* and Robert Helpmann's Fratellini Coppelius vas received with the usual acclamation. The reception an only be described as tumultuous, and was unxpectedly made even more so by a brief display of bad nanners in the upper reaches which must have emarrassed the artist it was intended to please.

Two days later Danilova and Massine danced again the Can-Can in *La Boutique Fantasque*. When they made their entrance on the trolley Time seemed to have rolled back. Alas that the actual performance showed that this was not entirely so. The radiance was a little dimmed and there must have been eyes in the audience of which the same might be said. The orchestra did not help by dragging the tempo and, in any case, this production has never been the *Boutique* we knew and loved. Perhaps the art of Ballet is truly as ephemeral as we sometimes fear it to be and all but the supreme masterpieces must pass away in due time. In our memories they do not fade and neither do their dancers.

There have been other excitements which not even Danilova's return can overshadow. First Fonteyn's return on February 25th in *Cinderella*. As anticipated she gave the role that final stamp of authority which the other two Cinderellas, delightful as they are, cannot quite compass. In the first act she recaptured the pathos which has recently been somewhat sacrificed to the new brilliance she has discovered. This she rightly kept for the second act where she shone with happiness. The little alterations to the *pas de deux* were all added touches of glory. We may be well assured that these initial performances are only the promise of what she will later do with the part. At the same time it now becomes clear

that *Cinderella* is a classical ballet which just falls short of providing a truly great part for the ballerina. Even with Fonteyn, the interest still turns towards the Ugly Sisters, for Cinderella has not been given quite enough to do. In Russia she has a *grand adagio* in the ballroom scene with four suitors and this may well give the role that necessary extra importance. Ashton may have felt that after *Scènes de Ballet* with its *adagio* for ballerina and five partners, and *Don Juan* which is mainly a series of *pas de deux*, a further exercise in the same medium would be redundant in a ballet which already contained two, but *Cinderella* undoubtedly needs a little more focussing on the title role..

A week previously, on February 17th, *A Wedding Bouquet* made its return to the repertoire. Opinions are fairly evenly divided as to whether this 1937 ballet is now able to take the Covent Garden stage. At the time of its original production, guying the Edwardians was a novelty, Victoriana not having exhausted itself as a subject for mockery, and lacking this novelty and the intimacy of a smaller theatre, there are some who once delighted in it but now find it trivial and *démodé*. I can see this point of view though I do not by any means share it.

A Wedding Bouquet has always had its devoted adherents, none being more devoted than myself. I regret that it was thought necessary to bring back the chorus which is largely unintelligible so that many of the jokes are completely lost, and still hope that second thoughts will restore Constant Lambert together with his explanation of a clever saucer to which Helpmann used to listen with so intent a concentration as of one at last gaining some long-desired information. But Robert Helpmann as the small-town (and French provincial small-town!) Lothario has always been irresistible, and the Covent Garden stage is merely a challenge to him to prove that subtle fun can still hit the back wall of the gallery when a master of it is in charge. His is one of those exquisite performances which make us all flatter ourselves that we, and we only, really see the point. Perhaps he reaches his highest peak in the *pas de deux* when he deftly parodies all the classical partnering he has been accomplishing these many years and trundles round the little woman who has finally brought him to heel with an expression which perfectly conveys that he has no idea what it is all supposed to be about but that the call of duty must not be ignored. Every second of him is a joy, and if the rest of the cast were only a quarter as good as they are, I would still find the ballet worth while for this performance alone. As the Bride, Margaret Dale neatly combines shrewishness with a sugary exterior—the Bridegroom is not we fear, going to have much of a time from now on—and both Palma Nye and Anne Negus have a lot of fun with the English Maid, Webster. Palma Nye has, of course, danced this many times but I was glad to see Anne Negus for once given a chance to show her skill in comedy. June Brae has her original part of Josephine who disgraces the proceedings by getting horribly tight on a very little champagne. What a personality she has! It spreads warmth throughout the theatre and she always seems quite unconscious of it. I felt that Moira Shearer's glorious hair did not help her as Julia (she is known as "forlorn") and the bluish lighting turned it a most improbable shade, but her moment with the flashlight could hardly have been bettered.

On the first night most of the cast, several of whom were back in the parts they created, seemed unusually taut with nerves but they have subsequently relaxed to the great benefit of the performance in general which now goes with a swing.

I cannot conclude without mentioning two individual performances. Beryl Grey's Odette in the second act of *Le Lac des Cygnes* is rapidly reaching that point of achievement when one is justified in talking of "Grey's Odette" as one does of Karsavina's or Spessivtseva's or Fonteyn's. Every held position gives one the impression of a beautiful piece of sculpture which, from every angle, is complete and perfect; and without any help from the orchestra she achieves an amazing musical coherence.

Violetta Elvin has recently given her first three performances in the same role. At the first matinée she made her entrance as it is done in Russia with a high thrusting *pas de chat* which brought her to the centre of the stage and immediately provided the keynote to her conception of a woman's soul imprisoned in the body of a beautiful, great bird. This entrance was not done subsequently and with its loss went some of the magic with which she had invested that first performance, tentative though it was in part. And was it fair to hamper her with a partner who was also making his first Covent Garden appearance as the Prince and could scarcely have been a source of confidence to his ballerina? Alexis Rassine is a true classical dancer but not of the *danseur noble* type and his choice on this occasion, when at least two other men were available who know the part inside out, can only be put down as yet another second cast mystery which is unfair both to dancers and public.

P.W.M.

Ballet Rambert

Ballet Rambert will be appearing during the first week of the Bath Festival which begins on May 16th. They will be accompanied by the Boyd Neel Orchestra. Both Ballet and Orchestra were on British Council tours of Australia at the same time, so this will be in the nature of a reunion after triumphs shared abroad.

on photograph by Frank Sharman

DANILOVA, HELPMANN AND FRANKLIN IN "COPPÉLIA," ACT II. A FIRST NIGHT PHOTOGRAPH

"MODERN DRAMATIC DANCING"

I HAVEN'T a programme, I haven't seen a review and I've come late. At a glance: distorted movement, shattered rhythms, to an accompaniment of creaking boards. Two hours of one woman, saying what?

I'd say this lady isn't out to woo or seduce. If she's aware of us at all her notion is to provoke—to anger, to argument, at worst to derision, at best to interest. And for whom does she dance? I rather think she's whittled her select audience down to one—herself.

If you've a fondness for classical form this is an outrage—but an outrage that will stimulate and strengthen your pleasure in classical form. If, like me, you're still rooted in a sub-soil of serenity, to shatter just to shatter can be a little exhausting. The poison of horror hasn't seeped through to us. Or we have discovered an immunity?

The eyes slide in this Modigliani face. Is she dancing human derangement? She places herself, takes care to place herself, emotionally, as out of reach as an epileptic. (Now an accompaniment, like a drip of water on a skull.) Does she follow a theme? Yes. No. Sometimes, perhaps. Actually it's the hardest thing in the world not to. Try it. If you're shy of paint or music try it in words: sit down and write four pages—or four paragraphs—of nothing, words without coherence, nothing at all. But it's a refreshing exercise; perhaps even important, like limbering-up for the athlete. You pick up your weapons with a new zest; or you never pick them up again; or you stumble over new ones.

The main thing is to break down the familiar. New forms. New images. Over my shoulder drifts (quoted) "Picasso of movement . . ." Of course she's almost bound to get that. Journalists' jargon. All the same, is there something here . . . be careful, are we putting it there? Is there new vision? In a general sort of way, I mean. Is there? Or is it just tossing away the concepts, breaking down the barricades, that's exciting?

A.G.-R.

MUSIC'S DEBT TO DANCING

By HERBERT STONELEY

MUSIC and dancing have ever been closely connected. If they are not of the same family it is not the fault of humanity, for they have had titles of affection down the ages, marrying them inseparably. They are the twin sisters of the arts, as someone has said, "The sweethearts of culture," and many other terms of affection to indicate their affinity. How many, however, who consider Ballet and Dancing the Cinderella of the arts, assume that but for Music, Ballet would not in our age be unfolding into its true place of affection in the minds of men? It is not a true picture. Actually the reverse is correct.

One does not mean that Music has not given much to Ballet. Nor is one decrying the great service of Music to Ballet, but how few stop to think of how much Music owes to Ballet and the Dance, indeed how Music has been enriched and ennobled by the gifts which Ballet has showered on Music!

At random one realises that modern Ballet has been the means, or should one say the vehicle, whereby Music has been made glorious. The lovely music of *Coppélia* and *Sylvia* is whistled by the milkman as he delivers the morning's milk. Even some of the lesser-known works are known by many who do not realise that the music would never have been born if it had not been called forth for the *Corps de Ballet*, whose beautiful and intricate movements have given delight to thousands. The process does not stop there. It has been evolving through many an age and nation.

Offenbach is a composer beloved by millions. Naturally, his opera, *The Tales of Hoffman*, is known to the majority, yet only the other week one was delighted to hear his Can-Can from *Orpheus in the Underworld* being whistled by a painter industriously adding more colour to the front of the house than he realised, and in more senses than he intended. When asked if he knew what he whistled he gave a negative shake of the head. When told its title he showed surprise.

"Can-Can!" he ejaculated. "Isn't that some kind of dance?"

Some kind of a dance indeed! Yet it is only one which, requiring music for its vehicle, has enriched what was only intended to be secondary. It was the dance which created the music, not the reverse, and the music will continue to live for all nations and for all time. This thought, however, opens a wide field. Are there other dances which have been the means of creating music for posterity? Quite a number.

In the French Revolution was born a dance almost dead now, the music to which it gave birth living and flourishing as an ornament to music. One means the *Carmagnole* which flamed the revolutionary passions of that age, being the favourite of Napoleon. Who has ever listened to its wild music without recalling the desperate scenes of that age? It brings vividly across the memory the guillotine, the plight of the aristocracy, the hatred of the mob, and the sad bravery of many now forgotten. It recalls the wild barbarity of the age which gave it birth as the bagpipes bring back the warring age of the clans with the music they commemorate. Yet, is the *Carmagnole* danced today, even in France? Maybe in out-of-the-way places. But the music which sprang from the dance flourishes and gives gratification to thousands to whom the dance is unknown. If it had not been for the joy of "the poetry of motion," as one great writer called dancing, there would never have been the music.

But example can be added to example. The Waltz is one which springs readily to the mind. We know the Victorian age saw its heyday, and feel it is a joy for all time, but the debt Music owes to its sister art here is indeed great. The many waltzes of Strauss are gems which will sparkle and scintillate for ever. In addition, his opera *Die Fledermaus* is one which will also live, not so much for its music as for its type of music. Still, does not the same thought arise here, that the Opera would never have been created had not the common folk loved dancing, first in Provence, later in Austria and France, inspiring by their love of rhythm the Strauss family, Offenbach, and others to score music which once written became glorious in its own right, so that man will love it for ever, even though he may hate and detest the art from which it sprang.

It does not end there!

The dance not only invaded the opera, and inspired it, it enriched the Symphony too! How few remember that the third movement of symphonies since Beethoven are *scherzos*, or musical jokes? Fewer still remember that his earlier symphonies were written on the plans laid down by Haydn and perfected by his pupil Mozart, and with them and other composers of their day, the third symphonic movement was that stately dance of their age, the Minuet. You may say it was an accident that Haydn, having to write music for his employer, Baron Esterhazy, created as a matter of course all types of music. The fact remains, however, that he did create and perfect the symphonic form, and made its third movement the Minuet. What matter if he had in mind the stately dance of the nobility for whom his orchestra played in the castle where he laboured; the dance was father to the music. Now the child sways the minds

otograph from the Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson Theatre Collection

A RARE PHOTOGRAPH OF ANNA PAVLOVA WITH HER PARTNER, LAURENT NOVIKOFF, IN "AMARILLA" IN WHICH SHE APPEARED AT THE PALACE THEATRE IN 1912

of many musical millions today who give no thought to the dance which inspires their delight.

This same process was at work in the mind of Mendelssohn at a later date for when he wrote his Italian Symphony, grand work though that is, the last movement is a particularly fine one because it weds the rhythm of the mind with the rhythm of the body for he used for his fourth movement an Italian peasant dance, and how gloriously the dance has enriched music here!

If one cares to look into other music, much music lives on in a sphere where it was never intended to intrude, and lives there graciously too! It is a debt which Music owes to Dancing. A debt all too seldom acknowledged.

What of that fine musical movement The Pavanne? It is quite possible that many a thousand listeners in a concert hall, or over the radio, listen intently to this music by the immortals. How much greater their enjoyment would become if they realised it was once like so many other musical gems, a dance, and as such, sponsored the music which now enlivens and enriches many a modern concert.

The Polka is danced a good deal today when there is held what is called "An Old Time Dance" whatever that may mean, for in most dances today the Polka still claims its place. On the Continent, however, especially in Bohemia, orchestras often give items which the non-dancer might never realise were once the tunes to which the peasants of long ago danced and frolicked on their little village green. Nor is the list nearly ended. Music has been enriched by The Corante. Another of its adopted children is The Quadrille, whilst it numbers amongst it children to-day, and is proud to call them such, The Czardas of Central Europe and that strenuous dance of the Russian Steppes, The Gopak.

Far too often the public, and even the Ballet enthusiast, accepts the idea that Ballet owes a debt to Music which can never be repaid. The opposite is more often the truth. It is Music which owes a debt to Ballet which can never be repaid.

Yet this is natural. Music is a later child of the human brain than dancing. We realise, dimly perhaps, that dancing is "the expression of the poetry of motion in the human mind". As such it is a natural thing common to all life. The lamb frisking round its mother expresses itself in the same language as the star of the Ballet. The difference is that the lamb is giving vent to a natural expression. The star of the Ballet has civilised and connotated her art, and that is the only difference. When we see this through all animal life we realise that dancing is an older art than music. That explains why Ballet has given so much to Music. Not that there is any quarrel. They are sister arts. But how sweet to think of the great music which has been created for and adopted from the dance. It is so great, so glorious, that musicians everywhere should understand the debt they owe to the sister art. It is a debt which can never be quite adequately repaid.

FRENCH BALLETS ON TELEVISION—II

By LISA GORDON SMITH

SINCE their appearance on television on January 3rd, Roland Petit's company, Les Ballets de Paris, have had an all too short season at the Princes Theatre during which they afforded an opportunity for interesting comparison between the stage and television versions of two of their ballets.

Les Demoiselles de la Nuit breaks fairly even, on the whole. Leaving aside any personal preference for one medium over the other, there are several losses and gains on both sides. On television, one missed the unusually suitable and delicately beautiful colouring of the sets and costumes, as well as the clarity of vision which the theatre gives and which this ballet and the facial expressiveness of Roland Petit and Colette Marchand so richly deserve. On the other hand, television spared the viewer the atmosphere-destroying and *entr'acte*-outrunning waits between the three scenes—a fault to which Petit is as yet too prone. (In *Carmen*, for example, he manages to get five scenes, all with different and elaborate sets necessitating lengthy intervals, into a one-act ballet—surely an all-time record !) But at Alexandra Palace, with only two studios in use, the scene changes in the television performance of *Les Demoiselles de la Nuit* were satisfactorily melted into a coherent whole. The death scene, the only choreographic flaw in this lovely ballet, is no less prolonged and no more decisive on the stage than the screen.

Janine Charrat's *'Adame Miroir* was less convincing on the stage. The atmosphere of mystery, almost of horror, which such a theme requires was less evident than in the television version, and one was left only with admiration for the technical ingenuity of choreographer and designer. But of the ballets shown so far, this still remains the one with the greatest possibilities for televising.

The third programme in the Grand Ballet series, on January 31st, brought us our old acquaintances Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées, who came over in great strength in this medium, their frequently careless faults glossed over and their virtues accentuated.

They opened with the second act of *La Sylphide*, which, apart from the inevitable overcrowding of even a pared-down *corps de ballet*, is very suitable for televising, and Philip Bate and his camera-men never missed a point. By the use of unusual angle shots, the Sylphide was made lighter, and the man heavier, than normal flesh and bone, and anything his dancing lost by this device was well sacrificed to the contrast. There were some beautiful superimpositions of flying Sylphs, unbelievably ethereal compared with even the best of "flying ballets" and the "fey" feeling was caught and held throughout the scene. Unusually full use was made of the diagonal lines of dance, giving some exciting patterns and the maximum of dancing space, and the background of dark forest soothed the eye and threw up the dancers very well.

Irène Skorik and Youly Algaroff each gave of their best, both in technique and interpretation, although the former's slight deficiency of body control still makes her tend to rely too much on her partner in *pas de deux*, with a resulting appearance of heaviness ; but the death scene was beautifully restrained.

Le Jeune Homme et la Mort seemed to be insufficiently adapted. After a pictorial introduction in disconcerting silence, Jean Babilée's double *tours en l'air* were too fast for the camera and went out of focus. His legs were off the screen on some occasions, and the first *pas de deux* also was badly placed. The small garret became a place of vast distances, making interesting patterns, but losing the necessary poverty-stricken appearance. Some interesting camera angles were used which occasionally sacrificed movement to design, Babilée's famous fall being a case in point. Nathalie Philippart has excellent television features and physique and projects her personality well, but the ballet did not televise as well as might have been expected.

In the case of the *Bluebird* variation in the *divertissements* with which the programme ended, the cameras were used with excellent effect, giving the soaring movements one dreams of but seldom sees in *Bluebird*. All the *divertissements* were well danced, pleasingly arranged and kept within the effective space.

On February 28th the Théâtre Nationale de l'Opéra de Paris paid their second visit to Alexandra Palace, opening their programme of three ballets by Serge Lifar with the English *première* of *L'Ecuyère*, a ballet by Serge Lifar and Constantine Népo to music by Joseph Kosma. This ballet is inspired by a story by Franz Kafka, but the terror that underlies all Kafka's work is portrayed only in the music. In the choreography everything, including design, has been sacrificed to

B.B.C. *photograph*

YVETTE CHAUVIRÉ WITH ROGER RITZ IN "L'ECUYÈRE" TELEVISED ON FEBRUARY 28TH

novement, much of which suffers from over repetition, ut the dancing of *L'Ecuyère* (Yvette Chauviré) is leverly based on the movement of horses, and it is iscinating to see the characteristic movements of the ingmaster (Max Bozzoni) and the Young Man (Roger itz) becoming horselike each time they come into hysical contact with the Equestrienne. J. B. Lemoine, s the Clown, was the most convincing of the four haracters in this ballet.

Romeo et Juliette followed, danced by Lycette Darsonval nd Alexandre Kalioujny, the latter being particularly ood. The ballet televised quite convincingly, but eemed somewhat uninspired. Although the effect of unlight in the forest tableau was good, it is a work that ceds the added richness of colour for completion.

Guignol et Pandore (*Punch and the Policeman*) was almost pectacularly boring, if such an anachronism can be magined. The only genuine puppet in the show cquired, by clever lighting and photography, more haracter than all the live dancers put together. For protracted, repetitious dullness, this ballet can seldom have been surpassed and it is difficult to imagine it ever being of interest, unless colour and facial expression can make an unusually large contribution to the stage performance.

On the whole, this last programme was disappointing, showing nothing fresh in the technique of televising ballet. But the material looked singularly unmalleable, and there can be little doubt that the producer still has some surprises up his sleeve for the final programmes in this series.

The action photograph by Duncan Melvin on the cover is of Renée Jeanmaire in "Carmen", one of the Ballets de Paris de Roland Petit

THE OTHER HALF OF THE APPLE

By CARYL BRAHMS

IF I begin by saying that Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées and Les Ballets de Paris de Roland Petit, are, like Pavlova and Spessivtseva, two halves of the same apple—by which, of course, I mean that neither company is quite complete without the other—I am not being ungrateful for their most welcome March season at the Princes Theatre. It yielded, among other works, one masterpiece: *Les Demoiselles de la Nuit*. One pot-boiler—and how that pot boiled with *Carmen* for flame! One Silly Symphony, *L'Oeuf à la Coque*, specially designed so that the balletgoer whose French is shaky may definitively grasp the difference between *Le Poulet* and *La Poule*. One *Bolshoi Scandale* concerning *Le Rêve de Leonor*, which turned into a most singular nightmare, featuring a disappearing score, some whisked-away sets, two changes of choreographer, a postponement, a second postponement, and a substitution of a notably sex-ridden *Pas D'Action* in practice clothes on a stripped stage, to excerpts from *Tristan und Isolde*. All these ballets were the work of Roland Petit. In addition, we were given a ballet by Janine Charrat about a neurasthenia of sailors who reflect endlessly that Man bears within himself, every hour of his life, his death—a Donne-like theme, which, danced, seemed longer than any of his sermons and so much less convincing. There was, also, one prolonged *pas de deux, Le Combat,* by William Dollar, effectively set by Marie Laure, with timely intervention by Wakhevitch—not mentioned on the programme—and exciting music by Rafaelo Banfield, a composer new to ballet. This was superbly danced by Janine Charrat, well-partnered by Skouratoff.

Why did I dislike *Carmen* for all the faults I could so easily forgive in the Balanchine-Bellini *Night Shadow*, given by the Ballet de Monte Carlo last summer? Both were based upon operas. Both made use of music that was composed for quite another medium. Both works were received with vociferous acclaim.

In *Night Shadow*, Balanchine balleticised his subject, using a number of imaginative simplifications, possible only to Ballet, which gave a special quality to the work—a quality that is only impartable by Ballet—and it kindled and stimulated our imaginations and our

RENÉE JEANMAIRE, COLETTE MARCHAND AND NINA VYROUBOVA IN "L'OEUF À LA COQUE"

Action photograph by Duncan Melvin

to Lido

TE MARCHAND AS AGATHE IN "LES DEMOISELLES DE LA NUIT"

Photo Lido

NINA VYROUBOVA, CLASSICAL BALLERINA OF LES BALLETS D PARIS DE ROLAND PETIT

motions. Moreover, the flow of wonderfully romantic nusic held no strong association with the subject as xploited in a different art form—or not, at any rate, for ne.

But in the case of *Carmen* the story was treated iterally. Even, at times, naïvely. I could not condone he dancing of the Habanera by a man—it was too hallenging a metamorphosis to pass without wrenching ny attention from the ballet and sending it flying back to he opera. Clavé decorated his stage superbly. Renée eanmaire and Roland Petit acted and danced magnifi-ently. And there were moments of unforgettable lrama and great beauty of line and light and languor that were taken directly from life and given theatrical uthenticity by the touch of a master choreographer. But how much better to have used the kind of treatment which Benjamin Britten gave *The Beggar's Opera* rather han indulge in the easy plundering from Bizet's score—o have made this ballet into a kind of Petit-upon-Mérimée subject, devised to an Auric-upon-Bizet score.

And so, while all London went to the Princes to see *Carmen*, I went again and again for the sake of *Les Demoiselles de la Nuit*. This evocative ballet which was lesigned to do for Fonteyn what *La Chatte* did for the oung Lifar, was strange and sad and charged with pity nd poetry. Petit is a natural for Pierrot—a pale loiterer if ever I saw one! And Colette Marchand, in Fonteyn's role, took on a purring and pouncing and kitten-like spitting and spite to the top of her choreographer's bent. The setting by Leonor Fini with its romantic apotheosis *sur les toits de Paris* was perfectly suited to Jean Anouilh's theme, and was most eloquently echoed by the melancholy romanticism of Jean Françaix' music. The ballet lacked only a *rideau* to act as visual bridge from scene to scene and a little cutting here and there, to be a *chef d'oeuvre*. In any case, it was a ballet of great distinction and the third remarkably complete work of art that Petit has created in the space of three years.

* * *

Throughout the season, the company showed that lack of discipline that is the outcome of extreme egotism but on the other side of the coin it also showed a refreshing amount of individual interest and ambition. In brief, it was alive and all over the place.

Roland Petit, leading his own company, has so far lost touch with classical technique as to have become, like Mr. Helpmann, an actor dancer—a branch of dancing which the dramatic ballets of the present day seem to be creating for themselves. Monsieur Petit possesses every dramatic and theatrical quality save that of purity of style.

I have yet to see Madame Vyroubova dancing at that

pitch of excellence which my colleagues assure me is hers to command. In my eyes she is certainly no Chauviré.

That lovely artist Janine Charrat has developed almost too pronounced a personality, for it comes between the purity of her work and me. But she is most faithful to her composer and her dancing has given me great pleasure this season.

Renée Jeanmaire is the most generally able dancer a company could wish to present. Her instinct for drama is tremendous. Her comedy is broad, not niggling. Her courage in undertaking any and every role is beyond praise. But she should not attempt the classical cadenzas, sacred to the Ballerina Assoluta—for the Jeanmaires of the ballet, the pizzicati!

Skouratoff is an artist who shows signs of becoming a dancer of *demi-caractère* of unusual ability. But he lacks the will to achieve a controlled effort and so his passages for the *danseur noble* are faintly ignoble.

As to the other half of the apple, it might have contributed the taste that this half so sorely needs.

THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF BOOKING

THE recent description of ticket buying at Covent Garden was amusing but also rather surprising. About the only emotion I have never yet experienced in that queue is boredom. I regard it, rather, as the social event of the month, the only occasion on which balletgoers get *nearly* time enough to say all they wish.

The excitement begins at least ten days before the fateful date as telephone enquiries pour into the office as to when and what they are booking. Since it is imperative to conceal the nature of these calls from the Boss some oddly one-sided conversations ensue, becoming even weirder when an excellent intelligence service has at last furnished the relevant details. Imagine trying to tell someone a month's programme without conveying to a listener that you are talking about ballet! Rash promises are made wholesale to friends unable to queue themselves, cash is collected until a bulging wallet gives an entirely erroneous impression of enormous wealth.

At length, after a night of fitful sleep, haunted by the spectre of the alarm failing to go off, one rises in the small, dark hours, dresses in at least two of every garment, swallows the tea and collects the sandwiches prepared the evening before and, laden with stool, scarves, and rugs as though equipped for a Polar expedition, essays into the silent streets. The ticket collector has become used to periodic appearances at ten to five instead of ten to nine but fellow passengers understandably eye one a little askance.

Skidding over the slippery cobbles of the Market and failing to think of replies to the good-natured chaff of the porters, one arrives at the Opera House. Here the miscellaneous luggage is distributed between the various queues and, should they be strangers, friendly relations established with the neighbouring queuers—this is most important.

A circular tour of friends and accquaintances then follows. News and gossip are exchanged—there is always plenty of the latter, frequently fantastic but always highly entertaining. More serious discussion and criticism also ensue and there is usually an older balletgoer to reminisce delightfully of Diaghilev and de Basil days.

Excursions are made to Smokey's for tea and toast at seven and to the Cremerie for coffee and meringues (so suitable for breakfast!) at eight-thirty. At least an hour must also be allowed for correlation of various lists. Arithmetic, never a strong point, disappears entirely at this hour although certain schoolgirl friends have been observed standing working out ten-figure logs—to them the glory!

There is rarely time to get really cold; should this occur one can always warm oneself and entertain one's fellows by the execution of a few *entrechats* or *brisés*. Preferably *not* in front of members of the Company arriving for rehearsal or of Miss de Valois who sometimes sallies round the corner presumably to compare complacently the respective lengths of the opera and ballet queues!

Tension increases when the doors open. Invariably both Box Offices are reached at the same time. This entails much frantic liaison between the two queues and top speed dashes round the corner through the coiling lines. However, one emerges at last, battered, limp from mental relaxation but triumphant, then, feeling reluctant to leave less well-placed friends, stays to talk for another two hours.

Eventual return to the office entails more telephone calls to announce the victory. Not altogether surprisingly perhaps, partial loss of voice is usually experienced by the end of the day. But then one must expect to suffer a little for one's Art and, in the opinion of this balletgoer at least, it is all so very well worthwhile!

C.H.

Photograph by Ian Gibson-Smith

PIRMIN TRECU AND SHEILAH O'REILLY IN "JOTA TOLEDANA"

International Ballet

Here is the itinerary for the next three months :—

April 18th	Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield, for two weeks.
May 2nd	Globe Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees, for one week.
May 23rd	Hippodrome, Coventry.
May 30th	Theatre Royal, Glasgow, for two weeks.
June 13th	Lyceum, Edinburgh, for two weeks.
June 27th	Theatre Royal, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, for two weeks.
July 11th	Opera House, Manchester, for two weeks.

It is interesting to learn that this will be the first time a ballet company has ever visited Stockton-on-Tees, a town of nearly 70,000 inhabitants. The Globe Theatre is one of the A.B.C. group of cinemas and holds about 2,500 people. The box office opened on March 14th (a week before the originally advertised time) and within a week the entire theatre was practically sold out. Here is proof, if any were needed, of the enormous and still unsatisfied interest in Ballet in the provinces.

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE BALLET

IT is good to have *La Fête Etrange* back at Sadler's Wells Theatre. Perhaps it will never have a universal appeal but its mystery will always enchant those who do not expect to have everything explained to them in words of one syllable. This revival (February 1st) is less uneven than the previous production by the Theatre Ballet and the new orchestration by Guy Warrack is better suited to Fauré's music. The fascination of the ballet (and this is emphasised at every moment by Sophie Fedorovitch's décor) lies in our not ever being sure that any of it is actually taking place. Does the boy *really* go to the chateau or does it all happen only in his imagination? And if he does go, do the guests notice him and can his mere presence really disrupt the future happiness of this young girl and the man she is about to marry? It is all like one of those dreams when we are half-aware that we are dreaming yet cannot quite pull ourselves back to wakefulness.

Andrée Howard has skilfully poised the whole ballet on a note of poignant expectancy which never wavers. She is a choreographer of uneven power but in *La Fête Etrange* she reaches and maintains a high level.

The boy is Leo Kersley's best characterisation to date. He has caught perfectly the bewilderment of a simple mind unwittingly involved in events which he never more than half understands. Jane Shore as the girl has the same simplicity. David Poole is as intelligent as ever as the young husband-to-be and it is not his fault that he is too young for the part. An actor or dancer of thirty or so has no difficulty whatsoever in looking twenty. It is the hardest thing in the world for a young man in the early twenties to look ten years older because there is nothing positive he can do in the way of altering his appearance. Hans Zullig has every qualification to portray this role supremely well but perhaps the many "classical" lifts present difficulties to a Jooss trained dancer.

Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet make rather a habit of filling out their programme with short and exuberant *divertissement*. This exuberance is misplaced and painful when they tear through a classical *pas de deux* or *pas de trois* but it becomes an exciting piece of theatre when it is expressed in something like the *Jota Toledana* which Angelo Andes has arranged for Pirmin Trecu and Sheilah O'Reilly. The Irish in O'Reilly responds to the rhythm which is in the young Basque dancer's blood and the result both exhilarates and satisfies.

If I had had to review it at the time, I could have found nothing complimentary to say about Nancy McNaught's *Mirages* when it was produced for an R.A.D. Ballet Club Matinée last year, and I am in the same difficulty now that it is called *Etude* and has been conceded a new production at Sadler's Wells Theatre.

P.W.M.

BALLET IN PARIS

By FERDINAND REYNA

DURING the course of the Paris season which followed their last appearance in London, Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées presented the first choreographic work of Jean Babilée, *L'Amour et son Amour*. It is astonishing that a dancer of Babilée's quality should have chosen for his first work the symphonic poem *Psyche*, by César Franck, which has no element of dance in it. It is true, of course, that nowadays everyone dances to no matter what music even that which is entirely lacking in the Dionysiac rhythm which is the ultimate foundation of the dance—and Franck's music is the least danceable that I know.

Now for the ballet itself. The curtain rises and we see an enormous map; between the two blue splashes which indicate the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea stretches the Caucasus in orange and yellow, whilst the coast of Anatolia forms the lower part of the picture. Two white-belted athletes appear. Psyche, a butterfly in white tights veiled with blue, welcomes them. She falls asleep and the zephyrs surround her, then carry her away. For the second scene the map has been replaced by a plan of the heavens, a décor instinct with poetry. The zephyrs bear Psyche to the centre of the stage where they lay her down. Eros enters and a delightful *pas de deux* is followed by equally charming variations before the finale. Eros is Jean Babilée, and his Love is Nathalie Philippart. One was astonished, unworthily perhaps, that so magnificent a dancer as Babilée should have shown equal gifts as a choreographer.

For my part it gives me much pleasure to observe that in his first ballet Babilée has made no attempt to shock the public with extravagances. His choreography is proof of a feeling for classicism which is rare amongst the younger artists today. It is a way of thinking and of creating very different from that of the generation which came after the previous great war.

A first-class entertainment seen during the past two months has been the Caribbean Ballet of Katherine Dunham seen successively at the Théâtre Pigalle and the Chaillot. The word "Caribbean" is used deliberately for the ballets derive from the tropical islands of that region and not from Africa. Katherine Dunham, who holds a degree in Anthropology, began her amazing career in New York. Her astonishing spectacle partakes of the nature of folk-lore, ballet and night-club entertainment. She takes us on a voyage from the Antilles to Brazil. One ballet is of an Haitian Voodoo, in which a cock is sacrificed in order to free a young man from a curse. This is highly impressive. Another ballet, in four scenes, tells a story of love and sorcery in the Antilles of the late eighteenth century. The audience is enthralled by the animal quality of the dances which, while apparently undisciplined, are in reality cleverly controlled. Bodies writhe, bound, fall back relaxed, rise and begin again to a ceaseless accompaniment of cries, howls, Creole songs and savage incantations. All this witchery of movement takes place under a fantastic lighting which evokes the heat and mystery of the jungle. Dance follows dance to the accompaniment of tom-toms and the clapping of hands, growing more and more frenzied.

Photo Lipnitzki

SERGE LIFAR AND YVETTE CHAUVIRÉ IN "SUITE DE D[illegible]" AT THE PARIS OPERA

It might perhaps be said that in this entertainment Broadway intrudes too much on Harlem or that Harlem is too akin to the jungle and the bush, but all in all it is difficult to resist the spell of Katherine Dunham and her dynamic company. In these ballets, savagery can be perceived beneath the most refined trappings of civilisation and culture.

A typically Parisian event has been the re-appearance on the stage of the Opera of Serge Lifar. This took place on February 2nd.

This return is an historic occasion. Lifar appeared in his own production of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*. We shall shortly be seeing him with Yvette Chauviré in a new production of *Giselle*. Lifar gives the impression of being perfectly at ease and to have lost none of his qualities as a dancer. But it must be kept in mind that at the Paris Opera Lifar has become what the Parisians call "*l'article-maison*". Without belittling his talent and the dignity with which he has borne misfor-

June, one nevertheless feels exasperation at the undiscriminating admiration bestowed on him by certain people. These people have built a cult round Lifar and formed a claque—unpaid, it is true, but a claque for all that, and this cannot fail to be displeasing even to the most sincere admirers of the artist in question.

By this return to the Opera after four years of exile, Lifar seems to have wished to re-affirm that his lot is definitely bound up with that of the Opera and to dissassociate himself from international ballet.

Another recent visitor to Paris has been José Greco coming from Spain with his troupe of dancers. Costanzo Greco (he took the name of José as a tribute to Spain which recognised his talent and the authenticity of his work) is actually the son of a baker from southern Italy who emigrated to New York about thirty years ago. From early youth Costanzo Greco loved and studied the arts and in due course became the *protégé* of the great Argentinita. After her tragic death Greco continued to work with her sister, Pilar Lopez, and on his first appearance in Madrid he was hailed with the utmost enthusiasm not only as a dancer of the first quality but as a choreographer whose creations truly belonged to the national art of Spain. Espartero, Argentina's former partner, himself endorsed this view.

Greco has been appearing with his company at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Ravel's *Bolero* as danced by Greco and the whole company is quite unlike anything hitherto performed to this music. The entire score is played without a single cut or change of tempo. It is truly a classic *Bolero*, developing gradually and inevitably. No theme, no plot: simply the dance and the music.

There is also in the repertoire a *flamenco* in a tavern in which the steps are not merely stylised but where the exits, the entrances and the *enchaînements* are controlled with a wonderful mastery.

To my way of thinking the great merit of Greco is that he does not show the traditional Spain as it seems to a foreigner but the true Spain of the Spaniard. The two are often confused in the minds of the public and such an art as Greco's will do much to dispel this misunderstanding. After seeing him it is no longer surprising that the people of Spain see in him the representative of their national art. Traditional dances, such as the Jota, whose steps we have seen a thousand times to the point of monotony, are presented by Greco in his *ensembles* only as elements in the creation of true ballet. It seems certain that Greco will not stop at his present success but will go on even further.

Since the Ballets d'Argentina at the Opéra Comique nothing like this has been seen in Paris. The Spanish creations of Massine and other great choreographers belong to another æsthetic and naturally do not come into the discussion. I only allude here to everything that has been presented up to now as being typically Spanish.

JOSÉ GRECO WHO HAS BEEN APPEARING RECENT IN PARIS WITH HIS COMPANY OF SPANISH DANCE

JEAN BABILÉE AND NATHALIE PHILIPPART IN BABILÉE'S FIR BALLET, "L'AMOUR ET SON AMOUR"

A BALLET-GOER'S CAUSERIE (1)

By ALAN STOREY

THE NEW BROOM

THE recent death of Krzsmaly, and Mr. Newman's generous tribute to the man and his work, has aroused a curiosity and interest in musical circles which would have been more fittingly expressed during the composer's lifetime. Unfortunately, the notorious conservatism of British concert arrangers and Krzsmaly's almost morbid aversion to all kinds of publicity (including that attendant on public performance) have, up to now, effectively combined to prevent us from hearing the last fruits of his genius—the *Symphonie Silencieux*, the *Quartettes sans Essence* and the *Ballet du Néant*; of which even the scores are still generally unobtainable. The complexities and obscurities inherent in the symphony and quartets must, however, place them beyond the immediate understanding of the general listener. And, in this respect, they may be said to occupy a similar position in music to that occupied in literature by *Finnegan's Wake*. "Always", as Mr. Newman so justly remarks, "he (Krzsmaly) was in quest of the noumenon behind phenomena"; and to this end he devoted himself, during the closing stages of his life, to a deliberate refinement—"vitiation", as he described it—of sound *per se*, which demands from the listener an exceptional aural sensitivity. The less exacting and comparatively simple *Ballet du Néant* may, therefore, be regarded as a key to Krzsmaly's musico-æstheticism. Its concessions to conventional modality, its grudging lapses into atonalism and sly burlesque of Stravinsky's Neo-Classicism, provide a Thesean thread for the persevering listener. Here, one feels, is the music of the post-atomic age, when the world is once more a void released from conflict; a world indeed *sans blague*. But, apart from its intrinsic excellence as absolute music, the *Ballet du Néant* is a theatrical masterpiece destined to revolutionise the present condition of choreographic creation and give it an entirely new direction.

AN EARLY AND HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED PHOTOGRAPH OF ANTIM CRUD

The work was commissioned by the Lettish Government in 1943 at the express request of the State Ballet Master, Antim Crud—a disciple and former pupil of Krzsmaly during the latter's professorship at the Knerz Conservatoire. Though little is known of Crud's work in Western Europe, the reports of eye-witnesses tell of astonishing developments in the extension of academic technique, of strange experiments in choremantics. He is, and has always been, first and foremost a pioneer. "I am", he has said, "a scientist—my laboratory is the classroom and my problem, the relationship of the human body to time and space." Their brief collaboration at an end, Krzsmaly wrote of him: "He, more than any other living being, symbolises the reconciliation of science and art. He is the first of a new race, the artist-scientist."* Crud characteristically disclaimed the tribute, remarking: "I have merely applied Krzsmaly's own findings to the dance." During the years 1937 to 1940 (ten years after he had forsaken music for ballet), he devoted himself to the training of a new kind of dancer and, as a result, produced Khali Mur, whose elevation is said to excel that of Nijinsky; and Iris Ver, possibly the greatest ballerina of the century. The basis of Crud's technical training is provided by the classical tradition, in which pupils must show considerable proficiency before they are accepted for more advanced tuition. The nature of this tuition is best explained by Crud in one of his Riga lectures. "Further progress in ballet", he remarks, "is prevented by a single and apparently permanent obstacle—the human body. It is true that in the past the art of classical dancing was governed by the physical limitations of its dancers, and by their efforts to over-

**Dirdistresz vo musikas ze coregrafen*, Knerz, 1944.

come them, be they illusionary or actual. This was all very well as long as ballet remained on the same level as the funambules or the circus *haute école*. But today, my friends, we rightly demand something more than exhibitionism. Indeed we have ceased to consider many of these pyrotechnics as difficulties; the sight of dancers walking easily *sur les pointes* or indulging in a series of multiple *fouettés* is a commonplace only to be remarked on when used inappropriately. Imagine then what the result would be if *all* such difficulties were removed and the human body subjected utterly to its owner—so!" (Here Crud usually emphasises his point by raising his left leg behind him in a strange stork-like movement, until the ball of the foot rests against the nape of his neck. He then remains in this attitude without any sign of strain until the conclusion of the lecture.) "You are surprised, even disbelieving? Yet my dancers have done as much, and more, under my guidance. The explanation of this apparent miracle is to be found in the East. Some of you may have watched Indian, Balinese or Chinese dancers and marvelled at their remarkable muscular control? As servants of religion they are simply applying certain religious precepts to rationalised movement. These precepts require full control of the respiratory and nervous systems in order that the spirit, unhampered by physical restraints, may be free for contemplative exercise. After many years, assisted by my Guru, I have mastered the principles of Karma Yoga and adapted them to the requirements of the dance. Consequently my dancers are now able to perform any step or *enchaînement* that may be required of them as easily as they would walk across this platform." Crud then goes on to demonstrate that since such academic ballets as *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Princess* owe their *raison d'être* to an inherent conflict between technique and technician, the removal of that conflict must inevitably remove their validity as works of art.

During his recent visit to this country, to study the work of his contemporaries, and to make preliminary arrangements for a future season of Lettish Ballet, I had many opportunities to discuss problems of dance creation with him. Perhaps the most interesting of these conversations was on the vexed question, Can ballet be regarded as an interpretative medium? He saw most of the new French and British ballets and remained unimpressed by the work of his contemporaries; "How childish: how utterly unrefined!" was his invariable comment as we left the theatre. He appears to regard all attempts to turn ballet away from abstractism—or non-representationalism, as he prefers to describe it—as retrogressive. "Ballet," he declared during an argument, "is incapable of expression without resort to some alien element such as mime or the spoken word; and even then the result is primitive. You mention symbolism, but the only symbolism I have seen so far has been presented in terms of crude violence; the violence of Death expressed as a seductive woman or a preposterous bogey-man; and the crudities of sexual love conveyed by stupid acrobatics; on all sides an expense of energy in a waste of shame—and to what end? Have you read *Die Gesellschaft vom Dachboden?** Kreuder's Waldemar has the right idea—he sums up these people correctly. What has the dance to do with this bogus reality? The aim of the ballet-maker should be to transcend materialisations and attain to the ideal of Rimbaud and Krzsmaly, to 'the sight of what cannot be seen and the sound of what cannot be heard'. There is altogether too much movement in ballet; it is part of the elephantiasis attacking art generally—too much paint on canvases; too many notes in music. Every apprentice dancer should be made to learn by heart the saying of Lao-Tzu, 'Attain complete vacuity, and sedulously preserve a state of repose'." I pointed out that, in effect, many of our native dancers had attained this, but he merely shrugged.

The only ballets which really roused his interest were Ashton's *Symphonic Variations* and Lichine's *La Création*. He noted a certain economy in the former that pleased him, and he particularly applauded Ashton's partial success in eliminating the personal element ("those dreadful damp souls!"). At the same time, however, he deplored the ballet's dependence on the César Franck score. "How many times must I insist that the dance cannot interpret anything, least of all music. The so-called relationship between music and the dance is merely superficial; a matter of common rhythm and tempi which are, in fact, shared by all other arts. The music of *Symphonic Variations* is an anomaly; it is like the scaffolding attached to a completed building; redundant once its purpose has been achieved. Remove it and the essential structure remains; leave it and one is only aware of distraction."

For a moment his eyes closed. "Ah!" he sighed, "what a chance he had, and lost through fear—yes, fear!" he emphasised, noting my surprise. "Ashton's essential failure lies in his refusal to cast off the last strands binding him to the past—in his reluctance to discard his dancers and accept the true meaning of movement which lies beyond such obstacles. . . . It is a beautiful but incomplete gesture of renunciation, this *Symphonic Variations*; the arrested genuflection of the neophyte who draws suddenly back from the nothingness awaiting him, and from which there is no return. But there cannot be any compromise in abstract ballet. No keeping one's feet on reality with one's head thrust

*A novel by Ernst Kreuder recently translated into English by Robert Kee and published here by Putnam & Co. The passage referred to by Crud is a denunciation of realism in art by one of the characters, who says of its practitioners: "True excitement comes from imagination and not from hard work. But no exciting idea ever occurs to them. They're too well trained for anything like that to occur to them. Too slick, too boring. And they're determined to write, cost what it may, and of course it doesn't cost them anything and brings in the dividends."

PETER REVITT'S BALLET GUYED (NO. 8)
JEAN BABILEE IN "LE JEUNE HOMME ET LA MORT"

beyond time and space. There are no bounds to movement: it must be infinite. "Of course," he generously admitted, "it may not be altogether Ashton's fault. Unfortunately one has to work with the material to hand, and there's no denying that your English dancers are so *solid*, so obviously *there*, that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to abstract them entirely. One might just as well try to cook an omelette in peanut butter."

The Lichine ballet intrigued him because it indicated the truth of his own theories, and disgusted him because its imposed vulgarity of theme was self-destructive. "He removes music and décor and then goes on to romanticise their absence. The ballet-maker has no time to woo muses," he grimaced, "he either thinks: 'This is bloody hard work'! or else, 'that's good, I wonder how it happened?'" And then, with a touch of his heavy irony, "I missed the mustiness—you know, the smell of tights and old sweaters. Lichine should have brought that in and left out the dancers. That is the noumenon of creation—that and lumbago."

I have quoted Crud extensively in order to give the reader some idea of his metaphysical-mystic approach to ballet. This of course is most clearly revealed in the exquisite proportions of the *Ballet du Néant*. The work, as one would expect, has no programme; not even a list of the dancers performing. The only guidance Crud gives to his audience is contained in a quotation from *Hamlet*. "O, throw away the worser part of it . . . " The ballet opens with an orchestral *tutti* which dies away after a defiant survey of the whole tone scale by a solo clarinet. From this point onwards Krzsmaly adheres strictly to his own idiom played on instruments tuned to a supersonic pitch. Incidentally, the use of these instruments led to a curious incident at the première of the ballet. Visitors will recall that a quaint feature of the Knerz Opera House are the bird-cages containing canaries which adorn the walls at regular intervals—a relic of the old days of gas-lighting. These birds, usually so well-behaved during performances, suddenly emitted a piercing whistle and then were silent. On further investigation they were discovered lying on the bottoms of their cages, dead. But to return to the ballet. The curtain rises to reveal six dancers sitting in the Lotus posture before a backcloth depicting a gigantic navel. Their eyes are averted and their hands describe the sacred word AUM. Suddenly, almost imperceptibly, their heads begin to move horizontally to and fro, accompanying the seductive tremors in the air. The lighting dims until only the navel remains, glowing feebly in an aura of "black" light; eventually even this fades away. And now one is aware at last of the approach of a nothingness older than eternity; of a momentary apprehension of the plane at a point in the line—the sense of vastness in this small space is the vastness of all that has been felt in the present. And in the midst of this great silence and profound unseen, one imagines sounds that have never been heard, sights that have never been seen. . . . The music resolves into a ghostly series of augmented thirds; the lights raise slowly and the place of the navel is occupied by a solitary eye. As the curtain lowers, it winks—gently but firmly.

Mariemma at the Princes Theatre

Mariemma, hailed in America as the successor to Argentina, gave a two weeks' season which opened on March 21st. She is a small, pretty woman with a large smile which switches on and off but otherwise she has little facial range. Her foot beats are meticulous and her castanet playing a miracle but her personality is not striking and she lacks the pride which is so essential a characteristic of great Spanish dancing. In short, her dancing is impeccably precise but over-refined. Her two male dancers were adequate, her guitarist rather more than that and her pianist quite wonderful.

NEWS FROM MOSCOW

By ELENA ROSLAVLEVA

THE return of *Baby Stork* to the ballet stage was hailed by both children and ballet lovers. The first received one more ballet of the scanty special children's repertoire. The second saw in the new production of *Baby Stork* a full-fledged choreographic work of no small importance.

Baby Stork, music by Kabalevsky, was first produced in 1937, a little over eleven years ago, by three choreographers N. Popko, L. Pospekhin and Artist Emeritus A. I. Radunsky, as a school performance. The pupils, who at the time performed all the main parts, have travelled far since the 1937 première. Maya Plisetskaya, the Cat, is now one of the leading young ballerinas of the Bolshoi Theatre, taking title parts in *Raymonda*, *Swan Lake*, *Casse Noisette*. Yuri Kondratov is now Artist Emeritus of the R.S.F.S.R., dancing such parts as the Prince in *Swan Lake*, and *Cinderella*, Baziel in *Don Quixote* and Vatzlav in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. Marianna Bogolubskaya, who in 1937 danced one of the small variations, is now one of the first soloists of the Bolshoi Theatre. Balletomanes remember her still as the Cupid in *Don Quixote*—a very difficult part usually danced by one of the most gifted pupils of the third class. Choreographers A. Radunsky, L. Pospekhin and N. Popko (of these the last two are young men, while Radunsky belongs to the middle generation and is a mime of no mean calibre) have made great progress since their first joint effort. They have done the choreography for the ballets *Svetlana* and *Crimson Sails*, while the present revival of *Baby Stork* is really a new production. Nicolai Popko himself has grown into one of the leading dancer-mimes of the Bolshoi theatre. He has lent new colour to the traditional part of Ivan the Fool in *Koniok-Gorbunok* (*Hump Backed Horse*), and his little daughter Tania, aged nine, entered the first class of the Bolshoi Theatre School last autumn, attracting attention by her quaint pixy face.

The present revival has proved that *Baby Stork* has withstood the test of time. Now, however, it is a more mature, more professional work. Some "numbers" have been included, some omitted. On the whole the chief merit of the ballet is its sunny atmosphere and optimistic tone. *Baby Stork* is not yet the ballet about modern Soviet life which we are awaiting. But it is a milestone on the creative path which leads to that future masterpiece. The ballet is a modern fairy-tale. It uses fiction alongside with truth, animal characters act together with children. This does not make an impression of falseness because ballet is an art which at all times will probably call for a degree of allegory and fantasy.

The story of *Baby Stork* is very simple. It all starts in the garden of a small house where a little Soviet boy, Kolia, lives together with his dog, cat and chickens. They are all a friendly family. An old stork lives in a nest made in the branches of a big tree. A wicked boy, Vasia, who is lazy and is a truant from school, throws a stone at the stork and kills him. The baby stork is now an orphan. All of the children-pioneers pledge to take care of the baby stork. They refuse to have anything to do with cruel Vasia. The next scene is the same garden in the autumn. Flocks of birds are flying away to warmer countries. The baby stork watches them sadly. He is much stronger now, but he does not know how to fly. Kolia and all the inhabitants of his courtyard—the kennel dog, the kind hens, the pussy cat, are trying to teach the baby stork how to fly. At last they ask their older friends, Olia (Raisa Struchkova) and Boria (A. Lapauri) to help them. Olia and Boria show the baby stork how it should start, and soon its movements become more and more assured. Vasia, who has long ago repented, is also there, but nobody seems to notice him.

The baby stork takes off, saying goodbye to his friends, who dance as the autumn leaves keep falling.

In the second act we find the baby stork in a jungle. Baby stork meets monkeys, gorillas, the long-legged ostrich and other strange jungle folk. They soon get to know one another. The friendly animals show the baby stork all the wonders of the jungle. Suddenly a noise frightens the animals. They all hide. A negro with his wife and tiny son appear on the clearing. They are running away from an infuriated planter. The parents hide the negro boy under a wide leaf. They are unable to escape the pursuit—the planter sends two bullets to follow them. He then discovers the boy and starts mercilessly flogging him. It is then that the baby stork, educated by Soviet children, flies out of the jungle and protects the child with his own breast. Inspired by the stork's example, the animals jump out of their ambushes and attack the planter, chasing him out of the jungle.

The animals then surround the negro boy and try to amuse him. Beautiful birds of the tropics dance for him. He is then put to bed by a gorilla in a large beautiful flower. He falls asleep to the soft music of a lullaby. But the child wakes up and cries. He is frightened. The gorilla takes him in her arms. The animals decide that the boy is hungry and bring him all the nice things they like themselves—juicy worms, frogs, leaves and roots. But the little negro boy pleads with the big mighty elephant and all the other animals to help him obtain revenge on the wicked planter.

L. SHVACHKIN AS THE COCK AND L. KRYLOVA AS THE BIRD IN THE THIRD ACT OF "BABY STORK"

In the second scene of the same act, done in the style of modern grotesque, and therefore somewhat in disharmony both with the music and the general style of the ballet, the horde of animals, led by the negro boy, appear at the planter's bungalow, full of guests and servants. The planter greets his guests, his head bandaged after the recent encounter with the animals. In the middle of a grotesque dance the negro boy, thin and wearing torn clothes, appears on the veranda. The animals follow him and attack the terrified guests who hide under tables and chairs. The gorillas throw the planter into the huge mouth of a crocodile. Then the animals sit down to the feast which the planter had prepared for his guests.

In the last act we see the same courtyard and garden. But how much has changed in the same year. Kolia now lives in a nice new stone house. There is also a large new schoolhouse, and the whole landscape in the background has changed too. No wonder when a balloon appears, carrying not only the stork but many other visiting animals and the negro boy, it floats past the yard where the children are awaiting the stork and building a big new nest for him. The stork simply did not recognize the place. The children wave handkerchiefs, and the balloon descends in the yard. At first both the negro boy and the jungle animals look at the children with suspicion. They are accustomed to expect nothing but evil from white folk. But the kindness and attention of Soviet children soon wins their hearts. The negro boy is given presents, he is dressed in a brand new suit and finally is accepted into the ranks of pioneers to the cheering of all those present.

The animals starts a merry dance. The ostrich is very much admired by the hens, much to the irritation of the rooster. The camel (his part is admirably danced by two of the choreographers—N. M. Popko and A. I. Radunsky) performs an especially funny dance. The huge elephant (G. I. Ilin and V. V. Shevchenko) also does a few heavy steps. The ballet ends with a general merry dance.

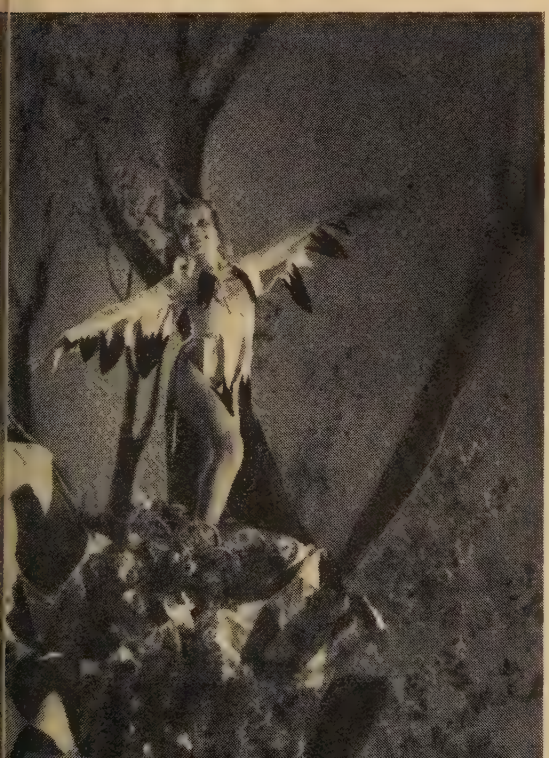
The most successful is, however, the first act. Here the choreographers succeeded in merging the dances of the animals and children so that one quite naturally passes into another. The animals, both in the music and the choreography, each have their own characteristic features. One of the most successful characters in that respect is the Rooster, danced and acted admirably by L. A. Shvachkin whom we were accustomed to see as the Fool in *Swan Lake*. Shvachkin possesses excellent elevation and very good technique. It was a great pleasure to see him in a part which enabled him to reveal fully his comic talent. The hens, wearing very good costumes, look gloriously stupid. Their dances are very well choreographed. They dance on their *pointes* but the comic style of the dance is retained. The old dog, dressed as a Russian janitor, who takes care

of the whole yard, is marvellously done. I did not like the cat as much, since she reminded me of Petipa's cat from *The Sleeping Beauty*, otherwise the part was very well rendered by the tiny dancer, N. N. Orlovskaya.

All the dances of the Soviet children, from tiny Kolia, whose part is danced by pupil Boris Beresin, to the teen-agers' parts of Struchkova and Lapauri, are admirably danced and choreographed. They are done lightly, cheerfully, in very good tempo. The choreographers were greatly assisted here by the composer, no doubt. The music on the whole remains melodious and emotional. What I do object to, on principle, is the introduction of singing in two parts of the ballet—the lullaby which is sung by a tenor concealed in the orchestra, and a pioneers' chorus. Ballet should be, and is, capable of conveying all it wants to say in the language of choreography.

The second act is more spectacular in the conventional way. When the animals of the jungle are trying to amuse the unhappy little negro boy, this affords a chance for a good old-fashioned *divertissement* in the pure classical ballet tradition. The variations of various birds were not very successfully conceived by the choreographers, whose domain, as seen from *Crimson Sails*, is not the pure classical dance. But the main *pas de deux* of birds of paradise, beautifully danced by Raisa Struchkova and A. A. Lapauri, her husband, who excels in "lifts" and teaches this special work at the Moscow school, was a beautiful sight. If it was in the old tradition, it could not have been done better. Struchkova is becoming more assured and refined as a dancer. She is now rehearsing Giselle—an honour which has not been won by anyone in the Moscow company for some years. Lapauri is not only an excellent partner but an outstanding dancer. Physically he reminds one of Mikhail Mordkin—a picture of manliness and great beauty of body.

V. RADUNSKAYA, A PUPIL OF THE BOLSHOI THEATRE CHOREOGRAPHIC SCHOOL, AS THE BABY STORK



The third act, while containing some very funny animal dances, did not succeed in conveying the same atmosphere as did the first act.

In this respect *Baby Stork* may be compared with another new Soviet ballet about pioneers—*Happy Shores*, choreographed at the theatre named after Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovitch-Danchenko, by Vladimir Burmeister and Ivan Kurilov to the music of a Soviet composer, A. E. Spadavekkia.

The first and last acts of *Happy Shores* take place in the Crimean pioneers' camp "Artek". The ballet is a story of three boys and a girl who started their happy childhood in Artek, then grew up, went to war, and returned to the happy shores once more to visit Artek, the girl to stay there as a guide for the children.

It is a ballet about friendship and Soviet youth. The first act in the "Artek" camp is quite interesting, though it somehow lacks the same atmosphere as the one in *Baby Stork*. Besides a colourful *divertissement* of various dances, done by the pioneers at their camp fire, the first act has a moving scene, one in which boys save their friend Natasha when she is swept away by a powerful wave. The boys are well done. Their characters are different and they are not made to look like model children.

The choreographic climax of this ballet is however in the third act. It is very difficult to choreograph battle scenes, yet Vladimir Burmeister succeeded in choreographing an impressive scene without a single rifle shot. The best parts are the dance of hand-grenade throwers (here Burmeister elaborated on his own theme from the ballet *Tatiana*) and the sailors' march. These two scenes introduce choreographic novelties and one may only wish that Burmeister does his next work entirely on this high artistic level. The The ballet company which he heads always seeks for new and original approaches and it is evident that they have now found the right approach to the modern Soviet theme.

An important trend which Burmeister mastered after the not so successful *Tatiana* is complete absence of any commonplace everyday details in this ballet. He concentrated on the emotional side, and was right because ballet speaks in the language of emotions. What remains to be done in some ballet to come is greater attention by the composer and the choreographer to

the development of the character and inner life of the main parts. As in good theatre, they should be gradually shown to the spectator, who is not satisfied, when the hero, who disappeared in the second act, suddenly re-appears in the last, wearing a hero's star. The spectator wants to know how and what made him a hero. This drawback deprived A. Sobol and A. Klein, both very gifted dancers and actors, from elaborating their parts. One of the three sailors was danced by Ivan Kurilov, not only a dancer of great talent and originality, but probably the best comic dancer in the Soviet ballet, if one excepts Nicolai Zubkovsky of Leningrad, who dances in another style. Kurilov was given a little more scope by the authors of the ballet, and used all the possibilities of his part to the utmost. He created a memorable character of a slightly awkward youth with a heart of gold, and a brave sailor who sacrifices his life for the sake of others by throwing himself under a tank with a handful of hand-grenades.

The greatest success in the ballet was doubtless scored by Violetta Bovt, an American-born Soviet dancer, whose parents settled in the Soviet Union some years ago. Both she and her brother were able to get free tuition in the Moscow Ballet school. Violetta Bovt is very strong technically and has been known as a promising dancer for some time. After *Happy Shores* she has deservedly earned a place in the first ranks of ballet not only as dancer but also as an actress. Working in a theatre bearing the glorious names of the founders of the Art Theatre, she fully mastered the Stanislavsky method and actually "lives" her part of a young Soviet girl, maintaining the type even during the most difficult dances, and rendering it with great warmth and feeling.

There is every reason to think that together with the choreographers and cast of *Happy Shores* Violetta Bovt will become winner of the Stalin Prize for 1948.

ASAFIEV AND HIS BALLETS

By M. MONTAGU-NATHAN

THE death was announced at the close of January of a Russian composer whose contributions to the balletic form have not only been numerous but have earned him in his native land the most encomiastic opinions. He was an unusually versatile musician and busied himself in every region of the art. It is evident from his own published works that he was one of the acutest and most learned critics and research-workers in the world.

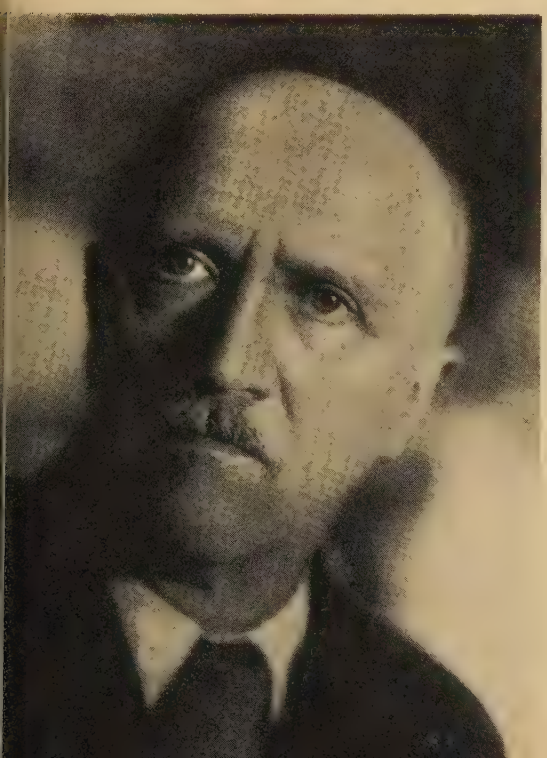
Boris Vladimirovich Asafiev was born in 1884. His family environment was that of truly hard-boiled orthodoxy, and his entry into the St. Petersburg University was taken as a matter of course. While at that institution he was able to appease his growing appetite for a general musical and literary knowledge by making acquaintance with what appears to have been a super-brains trust. This included such notable contemporary figures as the great *littérateur* and art-critic V. V. Stasov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Maxim Gorky, Glazunov, Repin, the painter, Shalyapin and Lyadov. In this variegated community the most potent personal influences were those of Stasov and Lyadov, and when the young Asafiev had graduated in philosophy and entered the St. Petersburg Conservatoire it was that composer who became his teacher. It is plain that Lyadov's ceaseless excursions in the field of literature, both native and foreign, constituted a mine of literary information for his pupil. Asafiev was also exhibiting a *flair* for the widest research in the regions of musical theory and history. He was fortunate again in the nature of his preparation as a composer of ballet. At a moment when his material situation was a little disquieting Rimsky-Korsakov obtained for him the post as pianist and conductor of the *corps de ballet* at the Maryinsky Theatre. While thus engaged he made contact with the leading figures in the world of ballet, such as Legat, Romanov and Fokine. We are assured by his biographers that one of his earliest attempts at ballet, *The Butterflies*, could hardly have achieved its success but for the advantage afforded its composer by the assistance as principals of Pavlova and Nijinsky.

His first essay in dramatic form was not, however, in ballet, but in an opera entitled *Cinderella*, at the decidedly early age of 22. Two years later came *The Snow Queen*. After a very prolonged interval, during which he undertook the provision of incidental music to plays by Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goldoni and Schiller, he returned to opera, taking texts from Russian sources such as Lermontov's poem, *The Treasurer's Wife*, a Tartar opera, *The Golden-haired Girl*, Ostrovsky's famous play *The Storm* and two Pushkin subjects *A Feast in Plague-time*, the work whose substance the poet is supposed to have borrowed from our "Christopher North" of the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, and *The Bronze Horseman*. Meanwhile his studies in the direction of research, including, of course, those of folk-song and lore, were laying the foundation of his repute as a musical pundit. In 1914, wishing to put his literary powers to the test, he submitted an article to the Moscow magazine, *Muzika*. This earliest attempt, over the pseudonym of Igor Glebov, was in the form of a mere *communiqué* on the subject of current musical events in St. Petersburg, but his highly provoca-

ive manner of expression, which caused consternation n orthodox circles, soon earned for him the place of nonour in the Moscow periodical. He was one of the irst to show an appreciation of the then youthful Prokofiev and did his utmost to encourage the younger composers. It had been stated at about this time, in nother Russian musical paper, that the first article in ny language devoted to a serious consideration of Prokofiev's work was one in English by the writer of his present essay, and it seems quite likely that it was due o this declaration that Asafiev, having, in 1917, founded his own paper, *Russian Musical Thought*, issued a most ordial invitation to become its British correspondent.

After the Revolution he received an appointment at he Institute of Arts, at which he was to occupy himself xclusively with researches in artistic history, and for everal years almost abandoned serious composition. He was now reaching a crisis in his artistic life. He had rom the outset exhibited the strongest sympathy with western European experimentalism, and had always ncouraged modernistic manifestations, even when they were extreme. The ardent sympathiser with artistic modernism now underwent a gradual conversion which was obviously inspired from political sources. t is clear that at a juncture constituted by the widely published communistic insistence upon the futility of he theory of "art for art's sake" and upon the social obligation upon artists of all kinds to render their

THE LATE BORIS ASAFIEV



output immediately accessible to the wholly untutored, Asafiev was influenced to attempt the construction of a formula for the future adoption of his fellow-musicians. He was now endeavouring to establish that the sociological function of music was a primary necessity. This was begun with a trenchant article with the challenging title, "Composers, Wake Up!" As is now well-known, several of them have failed to arouse themselves with the rapidity required of them in official quarters.

It is certain that Asafiev, on resuming composition, showed that he intended to practise what he himself was preaching. We have ample evidence that, quite a considerable time prior to the War, propagandist subject-matter was imposed upon producers of ballet. Shostakovich's *Golden Age* and the veteran Glière's *Red Poppy* are examples that come readily to mind. In Asafiev's case, however, there was present a personal facility in emphasising features of a propagandist nature in a much less crude manner than was possible for less documented composers. In *The Flames of Paris*, for instance, an elaborate affair in four acts, based on such events in the French Revolution as the attack on the Tuileries and festivities at Versailles, Asafiev has employed music of the period in such a way as to emphasise, albeit not too brutally, the essential and inherent superiority of the proletariat over a nobility that, in truth, was not by any means excessively noble. This kind of feature had apparently been quite absent from his first three, and pre-revolutionary, ballets, namely, *The Fairy's Gift*, *The White Lily* and *Pierrot and Mask*.

In his next important ballet, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, based on material already employed in a choral work by Arensky, Asafiev, in his treatment of Pushkin's poem, was able to "play down" the propagandist element. It would have been difficult, indeed, to introduce it into a plot which centres around a Polish princess whose captor, a Tartar chieftain, erects, after her violent death, a fountain representing the tears of his grief. A favourite item in this ballet-music is a cello solo in the third act, which provides a no doubt welcome opportunity for the display of the technical prowess of the instrumentalist concerned. In *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, another celebrated work of Pushkin, which was set as a ballet by Didelot in 1823, and many years later as an opera by César Cui, Asafiev may be said to have "gone all out". Caucasian folk-melodies and dances were laid under abundant contribution, serving to accentuate that manifestations of the musical art are to be observed at the periphery of the sixteen republics of the Union as well as in its capital cities. The introduction of live animals on the stage is certainly to be classed as the much-desired realism, whether "socialist" or not.

The socialist element is not, however, neglected. The subject again relates to captivity. The prisoner in

Photograph by Walter E. Owen

BALLET STAGE DOORS ARE THE SAME THE WORLD OVER. ALEXANDRA DANILOVA AND FREDERIC FRANKLIN LEAVING THE NEW YORK CITY CENTER AFTER THEIR LAST PERFORMANCE OF "GISELLE," TWO DAYS BEFORE SAILING FOR LONDON

this case is masculine and military, but is at the same time something of a "socialite". The chieftain's daughter who has become enamoured of the officer contrives to effect his escape; but as he is not warmly interested in the lady he omits to insist on her company —with the regrettable consequence that she kills herself. As St. Petersburg was part of the ballet's background the composer was afforded an excellent opportunity of introducing music which draws a contrast between the somewhat undisciplined informality of a proletarian gala and the dignified demeanour and general comfort prevailing at an aristocratic metropolitan occasion—laying due emphasis on the comparison.

In adopting the Gogolian story of *Christmas Eve Revels* (1938), so well-known as the basis of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, Asafiev took a considerable risk, especially as, being the author of a minute analysis of that composer's works, he must have been perilously familiar with the style and substance of his creative material. In the music of Vakula's flight in search of the Empress's fascinating footwear there is a hint of the *gopak* rhythm which served Rimsky-Korsakov for Vakula's leading-motive. The titles of Asafiev's other ballets as to which little appears to be known by British balletomanes suggest that he was in some measure influenced by the mid-nineteenth century Nationalists (Balakirev and his circle) to the extent of a free use of native texts. Thus, in addition to the already mentioned works, he composed *Stenka Razin*—an individual whose unpleasant behaviour was made familiar to us in musical terms by Glazunov—and for one of his last ballets he resorted to Lermontov's happy-ended prose story *Ashik-Kerib*—the tale of a wealthy Turk resident in Tiflis whose beloved daughter was sought by an impecunious swain, much admired for his *expertise* on the balalaika. It is unfortunate that Asafiev's score has not yet been made available for examination. Lermontov refers to this instrument as a *Saaz*, adding in brackets, for the enlightenment of the uninformed contemporary reader, the name balalaika. Curiosity is naturally aroused as to whether our learned composer availed himself of this opportunity of using some definitely oriental local colour. This necessarily condensed account of Asafiev's general aesthetic outlook, and of that upon Ballet in particular will, it is hoped, afford an indication of the reason why his Soviet colleagues unite in describing and honouring him as "a composer, *savant* and patriot" of the utmost distinction.

MARIA TALLCHIEF AS EURYDICE AND EDWARD BIGELOW AS PLUTO IN THE BALANCHINE-STRAVINSKY BALLET "ORPHEUS"

Photograph by Walter E. Owen

DANILOVA AND FRANKLIN IN THE FIRST ACT OF THE BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO PRODUCTION OF "GISELLE"

THE NEW YORK REPORT

By ANATOLE CHUJOY

AT this writing, performances of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo at City Center are quite a letdown from the exciting tenth anniversary season of the same company at the Metropolitan Opera House last autumn, reported here in the November-December, 1948 issue. The point is that between the autumn season and the current one New York has had a great deal of ballet, most of it very good, and the present season is not up to it in quality.

The New York City Ballet, sponsored by Ballet Society, set such a high standard of artistic excellence during its two-a-week performances in November and December and the two weeks of five performances each in January, that any commercial company would not have it easy to match its performances and evoke the same response from the audience.

The seasons of the New York City Ballet were a milestone of ballet development in New York. With a small budget, no mass-popular ballets in its repertoire and no commercially established stars to attract the star gazers, the New York City Ballet was able to play to excellent houses and on several occasions to sell out entirely.

One has every right to speculate that these seasons of the New York City Ballet did a great deal, if not actually to change the taste of the New York audience, at least to sharpen it. The productions of Balanchine's *Orpheus* (Stravinsky), *Symphony in C* (Bizet), *Divertimento* (Haieff), *Symphonie Concertante* (Mozart) and a few others have taken off part of the glamour of some of the standard ballets in the repertoire of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and the productions of the latter now appear rather drab. This, despite the fact that the company had Alexandra Danilova and Frederic Franklin for the first week and has Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin as guest artists for the remainder of the season.

The Ballet Russe season, as it goes into its last week, is still doing well financially and Markova and Dolin are having a huge personal success. But the performances as a whole are less than exciting. True, Markova and Dolin dance *Giselle* and *The Nutcracker* with their usual finesse and skill and their *pas de deux* interpolated between longer ballets are a pleasure to watch, but somehow they are not part of the company.

For another thing, the company's additions to the repertoire this season are regrettably very weak. The revival of Fokine's *Carnaval*, which Markova was

supposed to have danced though later she changed her mind, is one of the worst Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo revivals seen hereabout for quite a while. The management did not consider it necessary to go to the trouble or expense of ordering, finding or duplicating the two famous settees which used to grace the set. Instead there are two what appear to be huge packing boxes covered with dark grey cloth to match the backdrop, also dark grey instead of the deep blue one with the black and gold frieze which Bakst had originally designed.

The performance itself, with Nathalie Krassovska as Columbine and Leon Danielian as Harlequin, has the curious quality of a vague approximation of *Carnaval*, so irritating to anyone who retains even a faint memory of the real thing.

The only new ballet of the season was Ruth Page's *Love Song* to a selection of Schubert's pieces, in costumes by Nicholas Remisoff. There is little to this ballet beyond fitting some toe steps to the music, which Miss Page did fairly neatly. The question, why choreograph or mount such a ballet, remains unanswered.

Although the company's dancers, specifically Krassovska, Mary Ellen Moylan, Ruthanna Boris, Gertrude Tyven, Yvonne Chouteau, Patricia Wilde, Leon Danielian and Oleg Tupine (who recently joined the group) have exhibited some good dancing, the overall picture remains rather dull.

Ballet Theatre began rehearsals for its spring season at the Metropolitan Opera House, the first since last spring, due to open April 17, and one is hoping that it will succeed in getting ballet out of its current doldrums.

Nora Kaye, Nana Gollner, Maria Tallchief (on loan from New York City Ballet) and Janet Reed are the ballerinas, Igor Youskevitch, John Kriza and Hugh Laing the *premiers danseurs*. Alicia Alonso is not returning, nor are Melissa Hayden, Barbara Fallis, Fernando Alonso and a few others. They are now touring Central and South America with the Ballet Alicia Alonso.

Antony Tudor and George Balanchine keep the company busy rehearsing their repertoire, and Balanchine, in addition, is restaging some details of *Princess Aurora* which had originally been staged by Dolin.

THE EVE-OF-SAILING PARTY GIVEN BY THE BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO FOR DANILOVA AND FRANKLIN. NATHALIE KRASSOVSKA (WEARING A HAT), MARY ELLEN MOYLAN (NEXT TO FRANKLIN) AND ROMAN JASINSKY (SECOND FROM LEFT) WERE AMONGST THE GUESTS

Photograph by Walter E. Owen

No new ballets are promised, but there will be a revival of *La Fille Mal Gardée* with Reed and Youskevitch, a ballet which the company has not done since Irina Baronova left the organisation.

Meanwhile, neighbouring Canada has come forth with a most impressive second annual Ballet Festival, held this year at Toronto, March 1 through 6.

Ten companies, large and small, participated, and while some of them presented works not much above good school performances, five were on a high level. These included the Winnipeg Ballet, headed by Gweneth Lloyd and Betty Hey-Farrally; The Volkoff Canadian Ballet of Toronto, directed by Boris Volkoff; The Ottawa Ballet, headed by Nesta Williams Toumine, formerly of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo ; The Panto Pacific Ballet, of Vancouver, headed by Mara McBirney; and the Ruth Sorel Ballet from Montreal. If one considers that the Vancouver group travelled clear across the North American continent to come to Toronto, and the Winnipeg group more than half this distance, the interest in the festival becomes clear.

The Toronto Festival Committee, which arranged the festival, did an excellent job. Tickets for the five evening and one matinee performances were sold out in advance. The Canadian National Film Board made a motion picture of the proceedings and will incorporate it in its "Canada Carries On" series. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation broadcast a performance over the Trans-Canada network. Newspapers devoted much space to the festival, and *The Globe and Mail* imported this writer from New York to write a daily review of the performances. Mr. Ray Lawson, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, opened the festival with a speech from the stage. He also gave a reception in honour of the participating companies, attended by some five hundred guests.

Photograph by Walter E. Owen
NORA KAYE AS ODETTE IN "SWAN LAKE" WHICH SHE WILL DANCE WITH THE RE-FORMED BALLET THEATRE

The festival showed very clearly that there is a good deal of choreographic talent in Canada and that the people of the dominion are actually doing something to develop it, which is more than one can say about the United States.

Balletomane's Bookshelf

BALLET VIGNETTES. By Arnold L. Haskell. (The Albyn Press, 10s. 6d. net.)

The modest title and the publishers' blurb inside the jacket combine to give a misleading impression of a valuable addition to the balletomane's library. The book seems to promise nothing more than one critic's estimation of some leading dancers of the last forty years. In actual fact, some of the dancers listed receive barely more than a mention (which is disappointing if that is what one was expecting); instead Mr. Haskell has a lot to say on all kinds of important subjects;—critical standards, the various types of dancer, the influence of dancers on a company, the kind of training available in England, and a number of other subjects equally calculated to start one thinking for oneself. Of course what he has to say on the dancers he has chosen for special discussion is also of considerable interest though here, and in his chapter on Some British Male Dancers, it is plain that his comments were written a considerable time ago and some revision, together with a more careful reading of proofs, would have added to the value of this book, but even as it stands it is an essential half-guinea's-worth.

BRITISH BALLET. Edited by Peter Noble. (Skelton Robinson, 21s. net.)

In all fairness to the editor it should be explained that this book has been two years in the press and for that reason some of it is necessarily out of date, though valiant last-minute editing has done wonders, and the wide scope of the contents makes the time-lag matter less than it normally would. The book is a symposium of all the ballet activities which have taken place in this country during the last twenty years, and it has a biographical index listing 420 dancers, choreographers, designers, composers, etc. connected with British Ballet. When I say that the articles include those by Cyril W.

Beaumont on Antony Tudor, Caryl Brahms on British Choreographers, A. V. Coton on English Ballet: A Phase in its History, Robert Helpmann on British Choreography and its Critics, Audrey Williamson on Some Dancers, William Chappell on Some English Designers, and that there are many other sections of equal interest, it will be seen that as a reference book this is unlikely to be equalled until a further edition to bring it up to date is needed in a few years. It is a pity that the make-up is unattractive and that the bleeding of the photographs on a slightly too narrow page adds to the cramped appearance.

BALLET TUNES TO REMEMBER. By Florence M. Clark. (Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 5s. net.)

This has evidently been put together for the benefit of those balletomanes who like to hum but are not good at carrying a tune in their heads. Miss Clark seems to believe that Fokine is still alive and that there is a company called the Vic-Wells which sometimes give successful seasons in London. For sheer understatement her note on Miss Ninette de Valois is unlikely ever to be surpassed. There is also a List that May Help Us though Miss Clark does not say in what way, together with an explanation of some technical terms used in ballet which merely adds to the confusion. But I do thank her most sincerely for translating *Façade* for me. It seems it means "Frontage". P.W.M.

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